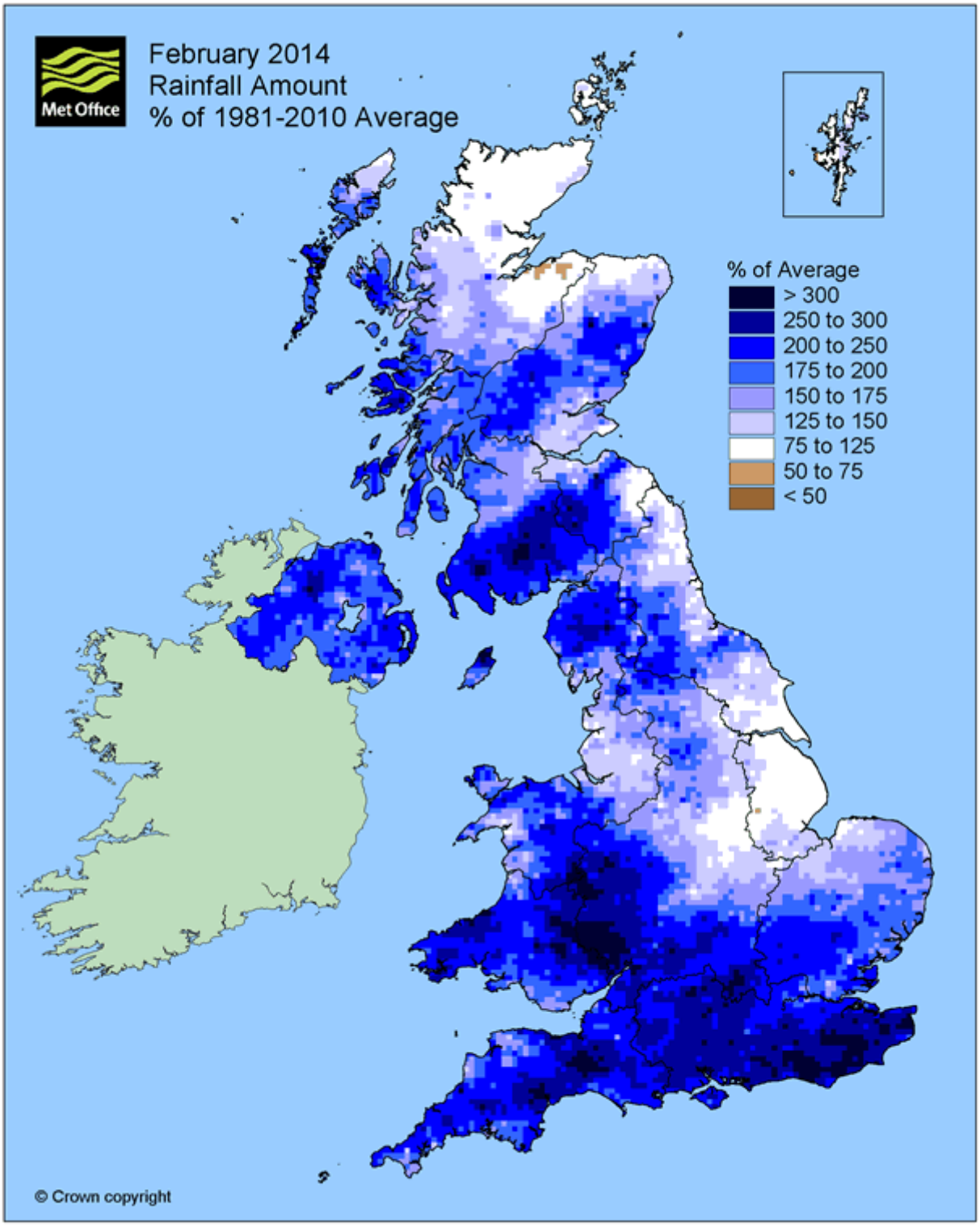
February 2014

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

February rainfall anomaly map:



February was another stormy, very unsettled and wet month. During the first half, the weather was dominated by a succession of major winter storms, continuing a sequence from late January, bringing strong winds, heavy rain and significant weather impacts including extensive flooding across the Somerset Levels and from the River Thames. Huge waves also made conditions extremely dangerous around the coastline of Wales and southern England. Although the exceptionally stormy weather ended on the 15th, the rest of the month remained very unsettled. However, conditions were mild with any snow confined to the Scottish mountains.

It was a mild month with the UK mean temperature 5.2 °C, which is 1.5 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, and the number of air frosts among the lowest in the last 50 years. The UK overall received 191% of average rainfall, making it the 3rd wettest February in the historical series. A broad region covering most of Wales and southern England received more than double the average rainfall for February, as did some other areas; a few places had close to three times the average. The region of south-east and central southern England, with 268% of normal, was only just short of its February rainfall record. It was not so wet everywhere though, and parts of Lincolnshire and the far north of Scotland received near average rainfall. There was a general division in sunshine across the country; despite being so wet the south-east of the UK was sunnier than average whereas some western areas were duller than average. The UK overall received 107% of average sunshine hours.

A maximum temperature of 14.9 °C was recorded at Kew Gardens, St James's Park and Heathrow (all Greater London) on the 24th. A minimum temperature of -7.7 °C was recorded at Altnaharra (Sutherland) on the 17th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 15th, 77.1 mm of rain fell at Dinorwic (Gwynedd). A wind gust of 109 mph was recorded at Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) on the 14th. A snow-depth of 20 cm was measured at Tulloch Bridge (Highland) at 0900 GMT on the 12th.

Weather impacts

The month began as January had ended, with a succession of violent winter storms bringing heavy rain and strong winds, separated by only brief quiet interludes. Many weather warnings were issued, almost all for heavy rain or severe gales, including a Red warning for storm-force winds over parts of Wales and north-west England on the 12th. Parts of the Somerset Levels remained under water for most of the month and some villages were only accessible by boat. River levels in the Thames gave cause for concern with severe flooding in parts of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey. The river Severn flood plain was also inundated. The Environment Agency reported at least 6000 properties flooded, and at the height of the storms more than 15 severe flood warnings were in place for the coast of southern England, the Somerset Levels and the Thames valley. Transport infrastructure and agriculture were also badly affected by the storms and floods.

The combination of storm force winds, high tides, and tidal surges led to some dangerous and damaging conditions around the coastlines of the south and west. The key rail link towards Cornwall was severed at Dawlish on 5th due to large waves. Many coastal communities in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset experienced coastal flooding and damage to infrastructure, buildings and sea defences. The damage was exacerbated by the cumulative effect of the sequence of storms arriving in rapid succession.

Many trees were felled by the wind and on 12 February around 100,000 homes and businesses were without power. Several buildings experienced structural damage from the strong winds. For example, the storm of 12 February resulted in some damaged roofs at Porthmadog, Gwynedd and a member of the public was killed on 13 February after trees brought down power lines in Wiltshire. A motorist was killed in central London on 14 February after falling masonry struck a car.

Although there were no significant snowfalls at low levels during February, Scotland's mountains had very deep lying snow at higher elevations, with significant avalanches occurring during the second half of the month.

England diary of highlights

The month was very unsettled, with a continuation of the run of vigorous Atlantic low pressure systems that had characterised the second half of December and all of January. The first half saw a succession of major winter storms bringing strong winds and heavy rain. Despite some brief sunny spells, the rain continued, with few dry days and some high rainfall accumulations for many areas. The westerly weather type resulted in another mild month with a notable absence of frosts and snow.

Temperatures for the month overall were above normal, with the mean temperature 1.9 °C above the 1981-2010 average. The south-east was particularly mild; for East Anglia it was the mildest February since 2002. It was an exceptionally wet month across the southern half of the country with large areas receiving more than double the normal February rainfall; some areas such as Herefordshire and Sussex received around three times the average. At 205% of average rainfall it was the fourth wettest February in England in the series from 1910. The south-east and central southern England area had 268% of average rainfall, and here it was the second wettest February in the series. However, despite the wet weather, sunshine totals were above average at 118%.

1st to 15th:

The 1st was a day of sunshine and showers, with a strong south-westerly wind, the heaviest and most frequent showers in the west and north with winds gusting close to 60 mph in southern coastal areas. The 2nd brought more in the way of sunshine as winds eased slightly and showers were more scattered. The 3rd was mainly dry and bright, although rain slowly edged into Devon and Cornwall in the afternoon and evening. The 4th was generally bright, with only a few scattered showers for the Thames Valley, but again rain spread in from the south-west in the evening with winds increasing: measurements included 35 mm of rainfall at Holne (Devon) and a gust of 92 mph on the Isles of Scilly. The rain cleared overnight but the 5th was still very windy with showers or longer spells of rain, and an 80 mph gust recorded at Berry Head (Devon). After a bright start for areas away from the south-west on the 6th, wind and rain spread to many areas by midday. Overnight rain for central and south-eastern areas cleared during the morning of the 7th, leaving a drier day with only scattered showers, but more rain reached the south-west later. The 8th started bright after overnight rain and very strong winds cleared but showers developed widely by the afternoon; Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight) recorded a gust of 92 mph. The 9th was another windy day, featuring scattered showers; the strongest gust (81 mph) was again recorded at Needles Old Battery. The 10th was dry and bright in the north but central and southern areas had scattered showers. A band of rain spread from the west during the morning of the 11th, clearing in the afternoon to leave scattered showers. Rain and gale-force winds hit much of the country on the 12th; winds gusted to 96 mph at Needles Old Battery and to over 70 mph on the Lancashire coast. Shap (Cumbria) recorded 49 mm rainfall, and there was snow on the leading edge of the front for high ground in the north with Copley (Durham) reporting a depth of 10cm. Winds eased by daybreak on the 13th, which was a brighter day with sunny spells and scattered showers. The 14th started bright but gale-force winds and rain spread eastwards across much of the country; Needles Old Battery recorded a gust of 108 mph and there was another 30 mm of rain for Devon and Cornwall. A cooler, brighter day with blustery showers followed on the 15th.

16th to 28th:

A mainly bright and dry day on the 16th. Rain spread from the west during the morning of the 17th to reach eastern areas by dusk. The 18th saw sunshine and showers, with the far north and south seeing the most showers. The 19th was generally bright, with only light scattered showers in central areas, but rain reached the far south-west by evening. This rain cleared away eastwards on the morning of the 20th, leaving brighter skies, but also showers which were heaviest in the north. The 21st was generally bright with scattered showers. Apart from patchy light rain in the north-west, the 22nd was mainly dry and bright. After a dry start on the 23rd, rain edged into western areas during the afternoon accompanied with strong winds; a gust of 69 mph was recorded at Loftus (Cleveland), and Keswick (Cumbria) recorded 34 mm rainfall. There was patchy rain in the south-east for much of the 24th, and a band of heavier rain reached the far south-west by late afternoon; it was mild with temperatures reaching nearly 15 °C in Central London. The 25th was a day of sunshine and

scattered showers. Northernmost counties had rain for much of the 26th, while showers developed during the afternoon in central areas. The 27th was a day of sunshine and scattered showers. Rain moved eastwards across southern areas during the 28th, with other areas staying mainly dry and bright.

Wales diary of highlights

The whole of February was unsettled, with a succession of major winter storms bringing strong to gale-force winds particularly in the first half of the month and some large rainfall accumulations. There were relatively few dry days through the month, but it was mild, with some improvement in the weather towards the end of the month.

The mean temperature was 1.5 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was the third wettest February for Wales in a series from 1910 with 218% of average rainfall. Sunshine totals for the month were 106% of average.

1st to 15th:

The 1st began showery, but rain became more persistent by the afternoon with strong to severe gale-force winds gusting to 76 mph at Mumbles Head (West Glamorgan). Showers and some sunshine on the 2nd. Rain spread from the west during the middle part of the day on the 3rd, heavy and persistent at times; 35.2 mm was recorded at Scolton Country Park (Dyfed). The 4th had sunshine and showers at first, then a band of rain spreading from the south-west by the evening. Windy with gales or severe gales on the 5th, and a maximum gust of 72 mph at Mumbles Head, and also periods of rain from mid-morning with 44.8 mm recorded at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys). On the 6th, showers then rain moved north across all areas in the afternoon and evening. The 7th was mainly dry and bright, but rain and strong winds reached western areas by the evening with strong gusty winds around coasts. The 8th began bright, but bands of showers spread from the west with over 40 mm rainfall for central parts, and it was windy with a gust of 79 mph recorded at Mumbles Head. The showers and strong winds continued during the 9th with gusts reaching 60 mph around the coast, although the showers became lighter and fewer. The 10th was generally cloudy with showers, widespread during the morning but more scattered by the afternoon. Rain spread from the west during the morning of the 11th, but cleared to leave a brighter afternoon with scattered showers. The 12th was very stormy with gale-force winds and rain; winds were strongest at Aberdaron (Gwynedd) with a gust of 108 mph. The winds eased overnight, and the 13th was a day of sunny spells and scattered showers. Rain through the morning of the 14th broke up into showers by afternoon with a strong to gale-force wind. On the 15th, rain in the north cleared to the north-east by the afternoon leaving some sunshine and drier conditions.

16th to 28th:

It was dry and sunny on the 16th, but the 17th was cloudy with periods of rain. Showers on the 18th, becoming more isolated with some sunshine. The 19th had some isolated showers through the day with a narrow band of rain moving through in the evening. Sunshine and showers on the 20th and 21st. The 22nd had an isolated shower but was otherwise dry and windy. Rain developed in the north-west with showers elsewhere on the 23rd, accompanied by gale-force winds. The 24th saw a band of rain moving from the west in the early morning giving way to sunshine and showers, then another rain band from the west in the evening. Showery on the 25th, with some sunny spells at times. More sunshine and showers on the 26th with a band of rain in the evening; this cleared to sunshine and showers on the morning of the 27th, but another rain band reached the west by late evening. Patchy rain moved south-east on the 28th with drier, sunnier conditions in the afternoon.

Scotland diary of highlights

The month continued the theme of unsettled weather, with rain and strong winds, reaching gale-force at times. The second half of the month was unsettled too, but saw less extreme conditions. It was briefly colder around

mid-month, but snowfalls were limited at lower levels. However, there were deep accumulations of snow at higher elevations across Scotland's mountains.

Temperatures for the month overall were above normal, with the mean temperature 1.1 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Various parts of Scotland had more than double their average rainfall, but the far north was closer to average. The overall figure for Scotland was 173%, the fifth-wettest February in a series from 1910. It was a rather dull month, especially towards the south-west, with 87% of average sunshine overall.

1st to 10th:

Most areas had strong to gale-force winds, blustery showers or longer spells of rain, with a maximum gust of 67 mph recorded at Dundrennan (Kirkcubrightshire). Blustery showers again for most areas on the 2nd, slowly clearing by the end of the day. Most areas started dry on the 3rd but rain slowly spread across the southern part of the country through the day. Rain in the east at first on the 4th, becoming showery later. Most areas had rain at some time during the 5th; only the north-west stayed mostly dry. Mostly dry in the south and the far north on the 6th but rain in the west pushed slowly northwards through the day. Most areas were drier and brighter on the 7th, with rain in the west gradually easing off. After a dry start for most on the 8th, more rain and strong winds spread across the country from the south-west. Most areas saw rain on the 9th. The west had frequent showers or longer spells of rain on the 10th but the east was drier and brighter.

11th to 15th:

An area of rain, sleet and snow slowly cleared to the east on the 11th. Frequent showers followed, becoming more wintry through the evening, leading to a snow-depth of 20 cm at Tulloch Bridge (Highland) by 0900 GMT on the 12th as the showers slowly cleared. Later on the 12th another area of rain moved in across most areas, heavy at times and with a little sleet and snow; 43.8 mm was recorded at Kinlochewe (Ross-shire). Another blustery day on the 13th with strong to gale-force winds and frequent showers or longer spells of rain, falling as snow, on higher ground with a 63 mph gust at Dundrennan (Kircudbrightshire). After a mainly dry start on the 14th, rain, sleet and snow spread across most of the country from the south with strong to gale-force winds. On the 15th, there was rain in the south at first, and showers became more widespread through the day.

16th to 19th:

Dry and bright for most on the 16th, with only a few scattered showers, most frequent in the far north. After a cold start, with -7.7 °C at Altnaharra (Sutherland), the 17th was another wet day for most of the country as rain spread in from the south-west. Rain in the north-east slowly cleared away on the 18th; for the rest of the country it was a mainly showery day but with some longer spells of rain in Dumfries and Galloway. Most areas were dry on the 19th apart from some patchy rain, mainly in the Central Belt.

20th to 28th:

The 20th was mild but windy, with rain for most areas, but it became mainly dry in the north and east for a time until more rain reached the south later. Scattered showers for most on the 21st, but longer spells of heavier rain in the west. Windy again on the 22nd with a few scattered showers but becoming very wet in the west later in the day with 68.8 mm recorded at Cluanie Inn (Ross-Shire). Wet and windy again on the 23rd for most of the country, but more showery later, with a gust of 61 mph recorded at Charterhall (Borders). Much of the country had rain on the 24th but this cleared to the east later. A windy day again on the 25th as more rain spread across the country from the west, staying dry only in parts of the north-east and Northern Isles. Another area of rain spread across the country on the 26th, clearing to the east by the afternoon and followed by showers. Blustery showers for most areas on the 27th after overnight rain cleared to the east. Showers or longer spells of rain spread across the country from the north-west on the 28th but in the east it was mainly dry and bright.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

February was another very unsettled month. Stormy conditions brought strong to gale-force winds during the first half, with some periods of heavy rain, but there were some also brighter spells too, especially later in the month. Throughout the month there were very few dry days, but also few days of frost.

The mean temperature was close to normal at 0.4 °C above the 1981-2010 average, although it was milder towards the east of the province. It was a wet month with 205% of average rainfall, the third wettest February in a series from 1910. There was 109% of average sunshine hours.

1st to 10th:

The 1st saw rain or showers, some wintry at first, with strong winds. Overnight rain cleared during the morning of the 2nd. The 3rd was dull and wet. After a brighter and drier day on the 4th, strong to gale-force southerly winds brought rain in the evening, heavy at times, with 24.6 mm recorded at Banagher, Caugh Hill (County Londonderry) and a gust of 65 mph at Orlock Head (County Down). Still wet and windy for much of the 5th, but clearing during the evening. Early showers on 6th but mainly fine by the afternoon; largely dry and sunny too on the 7th but rain spread in from the south-west later, heavy in places, with 31.5 mm recorded at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down). Rain cleared overnight but patchy rain or showers affected most areas during the 8th. Scattered showers affected most on the 9th. On the 10th, a band of rain moved through around midday but it was mostly fine either side of this.

11th to 21st:

After rain in the early hours of 11th it became dry and bright, but showers, falling as snow in places, spread from the west during the day. The snow was heaviest in the north and there was a covering for many areas, and a depth of 9 cm was recorded at Ballypatrick Forest (County Antrim). The 12th was a wet and stormy day, causing disruption particularly in northern areas. Ballypatrick Forest measured 41.8 mm of rain, and a gust of 80 mph was recorded at Orlock Head. There were frequent blustery showers for most on the 13th, heaviest on the east coast but dying out in the evening. Rain reached most areas on the morning of the 14th, falling as sleet or snow on high ground at first, and continued for much of the day: it was heavy at times, and amounted to 43.4 mm at Ballypatrick Forest. Winds were strong too with gusts over 50 mph in many places. The strong winds and rain cleared in the morning of the 15th to leave a sunny afternoon, but with some heavy showers in the north later. The 16th was largely dry and sunny with just a few scattered showers. Dull and wet on the 17th with rain only easing during the evening. Further rain overnight into the 18th cleared all but the far north in the morning. It was dry and bright for most of the 19th but rain spread from the west by late afternoon. Sunshine and scattered showers on the 20th. Showers were heavier and more frequent on the 21st and a north-westerly wind increased to gale-force later, bringing rain into all areas, with a gust of 57 mph at Killowen (County Down).

22nd to 28th:

Rain continued overnight and at first on 22nd, but by afternoon it was brighter and more showery; south-westerly winds continued to gust up to 50 mph, but it was milder than of late. The 23rd was another bright day with blustery showers. Rain spread from the south-east into all areas on the 24th, clearing by midday, but with further showers then more rain from late afternoon. It became dry overnight, but showers and spells of rain soon developed over most areas on the 25th with gusts over 50 mph in places. The 26th saw showery outbreaks of rain for most, clearing to leave a mainly dry, bright and breezy spell before further rain arrived in the evening. Rain cleared to leave a bright day with scattered showers on 27th. The 28th was a day of sunshine and scattered showers.

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